

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 411 029

JC 970 503

AUTHOR Rosa, Karon J.
 TITLE Evaluation of a Commercial Student Retention Program at Topeka Technical College.
 PUB DATE 1997-05-00
 NOTE 45p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova Southeastern University.
 PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Community Colleges; *Cost Effectiveness; Dropout Rate; Evaluation Criteria; Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; *School Holding Power; *Student Attrition; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

In response to increasing student attrition rates, Topeka Technical College, Kansas, a proprietary school run by Education America, Inc., adopted a commercial retention program that included faculty and staff training and a success course for students. An evaluation was undertaken to determine the effectiveness of the program, involving a review of the literature and other retention models and the establishment of the following performance criteria: improvement in retention, cost benefit, and enhanced faculty development. Outcomes were determined by comparing semester retention rates for 43 students who began before the success course was implemented and 38 students who participated in the course, and comparing the costs of the program to the revenue generate by retained students. In addition, surveys were sent to all faculty who participated in the training regarding the program's effectiveness. Study findings indicated that student retention was not improved among those involved in the program, with 14 students from each of the study groups dropping out before the end of the semester. Due to the lack of increased retention and increased revenue, there was no cost benefit associated with the program. The faculty, however, considered the training to be very valuable. As a result, it was recommended that further efforts be made to increase student retention. Contains 16 references. An implementation manual for the retention program is appended. (YKH)

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EVALUATION OF A COMMERCIAL STUDENT RETENTION PROGRAM AT
TOPEKA TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Politics, Law and Economics

Karon J. Rosa
Education America, Inc.

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A practicum proposal presented to Program for Higher Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
for Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University

May 1997

Abstract of a practicum report presented to Nova Southeastern
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TOPEKA TECHNICAL COLLEGE

by

Karon J. Rosa

April 1997

The problem under investigation was the evaluation of a commercial retention program at Topeka Technical College. Retention rates taken from the ACCSCT Annual reports showed a downward trend in retention at this campus for all programs (Annual Report Data). In an effort to find a solution to this problem, the school president and key managers adopted a commercial retention program.

This program included faculty and staff training and a success course for students. The faculty training and the success course were implemented with the July quarter start. The day students in first quarter participated in the course. These students completed the quarter in October. The worth to the institution and the effectiveness of the program had not been established.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the commercial retention program instituted at Topeka Technical College. There were three basic research questions to be answered by the study. What are the criteria upon which the effectiveness of the

retention program is based? What measurement tools could be used to operationally define the criteria? Based upon application of the measurement, did the program meet the established criteria?

For this study the evaluation methodology was appropriate. The procedural steps that were used in this study were a review of the literature, establishing criteria, validating the criteria, determining the measurement method, collecting data, and comparing achieved results on each criteria.

Improvement in retention, cost benefit and enhanced faculty development were established as the criteria. Each criteria were measured using the appropriate measurement tool. The chi-square statistical test resulted in no significant difference in the retention of students that attended the program. There were no cost benefits realized when the cost comparison was calculated. Seven faculty members, of the nine surveyed, felt the program was very valuable. Eight faculty members would attend a follow-up session.

The results of the study were disseminated to the President/CEO of the company and the campus president. It was recommended that the results be distributed and discussed at the campus with faculty and staff. It was further recommended that the College continue in its effort to find an intervention program that will aid in retention of students. The results of these effort should be recorded and distributed to the five other campuses in the organization.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	6
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	7
Nature of Problem.....	7
Purpose.....	8
Research Question.....	10
Definition of Terms.....	10
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	12
Overview.....	12
Retention Research.....	13
Retention Models.....	16
Summary.....	18
3. METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES.....	20
Procedures.....	20
Assumptions.....	22
Limitations.....	22
4. RESULTS.....	23
5. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	31
Discussion.....	31
Conclusions.....	31
Implications.....	32
Recommendations.....	32

REFERENCES 34

APPENDIXES 36

 A. The Program..... 37

 B. Faculty Survey..... 38

 C. Statistical Results of Two Groups..... 39

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Criteria Used to Evaluate Effectiveness.....	26
2. Student Data	27
3. Cost Benefit Analysis.....	29
4. Survey Results from Faculty.....	30

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Education America, Inc., a full service education management company, was founded in 1985 to provide quality career training in the fastest growing technical fields. The system of colleges includes campuses in six states and a student enrollment of over 3,000 students per year. All Education America schools are accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology.

Topeka Technical College was the first college established in this system (1985). The College offers programs in Business Administration, Electronics Technology, Legal and Medical Assisting. The educational philosophy of the College is "an uncompromising dedication to high quality, college level, career oriented education. The primary objective of the college is to graduate a high percentage of students who enter career programs and to help them achieve relevant employment at the highest possible starting salary (TTC Catalog, 1997)."

Nature of the Problem

Topeka Technical College (TTC) has a student attrition problem. The college is accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology. One of the standards of accreditation, as well as a requirement for continuing federal funding of students, is that the school must demonstrate successful student achievement including reasonable retention rates. Successful student achievement shall be

demonstrated by rates of completion (ACCSCT Standards of Accreditation, 1996).

Although the accrediting agency does not provide a specific formula or "trip wires", annual retention rates are compared to comparable ACCSCT accredited schools or programs. If rates are low in this relation, the school can be placed on report. Extremely low retention rates could ultimately lead to loss of accreditation that would lead to loss of access to federal funds for students.

Retention rates taken from the ACCSCT Annual reports divulged a downward trend in retention at this campus for all programs (Annual Report Data). In an effort to find a solution to this problem, the school president and key managers adopted a commercial retention program (Appendix A).

This program included faculty and staff training and a success course for students. The faculty training and the success course were implemented with the July quarter start. The day students in first quarter participated in the course. These students completed the quarter in October. The worth to the institution and the effectiveness of the program had not been established.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the commercial retention program at the Topeka campus. Topeka Technical College has a student retention problem. As a solution, Topeka Technical College spent money and invested time with a commercial retention program. If the evaluation study of the program demonstrated

that the program had worth to the institution, the school could continue the program and offer the results to other proprietary schools. If the results determined that the program had no value to this institution, the school could revise or eliminate the program and continue to search for a solution to the problem. Resources and time could be redirected with the school's effort to solve their student attrition problem.

Relationship to the Seminar

The seminar in politics, law and economics in higher education stresses that institutional decisions must take into account the three configurations of controversial conditions-- politics, law and economics. To ignore any of them is to court failure (Nova Study Guide, 1996, p. 67).

Proprietary schools are governed by the "triad" of state, accrediting, and federal agencies. With the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, the U.S. Department of Education gave more "policing" power to the states and accrediting agencies for outcomes in these schools. As a result of this, outcomes became one of the key item indicators for institutional effectiveness in proprietary schools.

Managers of proprietary schools can no longer ignore outcomes in student achievement (retention, placement and completion rates). Since federal government relies in part on accrediting agencies to identify the institutions and programs eligible for a wide range of aid-to-education programs, particularly those administered by the U.S. Department of Education, planning

programs for the completion of "at risk" students must be of primary importance in this sector (Kaplan, 1995, p. 873).

Research Question

The purpose of this study was to evaluate a commercial retention program instituted at Topeka Technical College. There were three basic research questions to be answered by the study. What were the criteria upon which the effectiveness of the retention program is based? What measurement tools could be used to operationally define the criteria? Based upon application of the measurement, did the program meet the established criteria?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined in an attempt to create a common meaning of words and phrases for the reader or reviewer of the study.

Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology. (ACCSCT) A voluntary accrediting commission established for private schools. The primary purpose of the Commission is to establish and maintain high educational standards and ethical business practices in its field.

Commercial Retention Program. Pacific Institute materials were designed to be sold to proprietary schools for the purpose of retaining students. Modules on faculty training and student success courses are a part of the program.

Retention rates. When a student finishes a period of study for a quarter or module they are considered a completion. Rates based on comparison of students who completed and those who dropped out of the program are the retention rates.

Students. Education America students are those enrolled as full or part time active students in a quarter of study.

Traditional Orientation Program. The traditional orientation program is one hour on the first day of class. This is an information session about the college. Students receive information on grades, financial aid, and placement.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review focused on the underlying problem of student attrition. A survey of research on student retention was conducted. Research involving various techniques that improved student retention was also a part of the literature review and courses used to improve retention were investigated. Secondary sources were reviewed for models of retention programs.

Overview

There is an abundance of literature on student retention ideas and systems. William Crockett asserts that over the past 15 years, the most consistent findings have been that positive interaction with faculty members has a direct bearing on whether students persist to earn a degree (Crockett, 1992). He also cites the Tinto model as the most frequently quoted research retention model. The main premises of Tinto's argument are that the decision to drop out occurs when students are not adequately integrated into the social and academic environment of the college, and that student background characteristics influence the decision to drop out only indirectly through their effects on social and academic integration.

Kerka's 1995 work on adult learner retention indicates that attrition is the number one problem in adult basic education. Quigley's study (as cited in Kerka, 1995) confirms attrition rates as high as 60-70% reported to state and federal government as annual report data. Kerka's article continues by reviewing 1994 studies by Kambouri and Francis, and Perin and Greenberg (as

cited in Kerka). These authors theorize that noncompleters sometimes leave when they feel their goals are realized. Data in these studies confirm that the majority of noncontinuers were classified as "early" (leaving before 12 hours of instruction). A recurring theme in these and other studies is the crucial importance of the first few weeks, especially the first class. Quigley's 1995 study (as cited in Kerka) also found that "reluctant learners" who drop out after the first few weeks were younger than persisters and were loners who felt they did not receive enough teacher attention (Kerka, p. 1).

Retention Research

Using early intervention as a solution to a retention problem is evident in the literature. A paper presented at the Annual Freshman Year Experience National Conference compares freshmen who enrolled in a College Seminar with freshmen who had not taken the seminar. The seminar course includes units on higher education in America; study skills (e.g., writing papers, research skills, taking notes, time management, computer skills); communication and interpersonal skills (e.g., avoiding date rape, solving disputes); substance abuse; stress management; values clarification; volunteerism; discrimination and other minority issues; and career planning. The paper concludes that students who took the seminar bonded more to the institution and experienced more benefits in both the academic and personal spheres (Starke, 1994).

Cullen (as cited in Kerka, 1995) suggests that retention requires vision to guide efforts. Programs control the

conditions that foster retention. He suggests a student support system, high quality instruction, and flexible structures and processes to help motivate and sustain student commitment. This author further states that "the pressures of juggling the roles of student, partner, parent, worker would be lessened if the role of student was seen as including the others". Cullen's subjects felt that being listened to and having their problems acknowledged was important.

Vanderpool and Brown and Towles et al. (as cited in Kerka, 1995) also found that personal contact improved retention. In the Vanderpool and Brown study, a peer telephone network supported adult commuter students through phone calls within the first two weeks of the term. Students who were called were retained at a higher level than controls; they felt the practice put a human face on the university and gave them a sense of community (Kerka, p. 4). Assistance with personal and financial problems; managing the culture of the institution; recognizing adult anxiety about school; flexible, convenient scheduling; and frequent contact with faculty (including electronic methods) were also suggested as strategies.

Eschenmann's (1991) article on motivating adult students suggests that many of the barriers that adults face while continuing their education can prevent them from successfully completing their programs. Components that should receive emphasis include financial planning, time management, developing study skills, and short term goal setting. Wlodkowski (as cited in Eschenmann & Olinger) declares that adult students who have

low self esteem, low levels of motivation and low self concepts, have reduced chances of achieving academic success. Boggs' study (as cited in Eschenmann & Olinger) asserts that teachers that are interested in student motivation are more successful in helping adult students attain their learning objectives (Eschenmann & Olinger, p. 8).

Coll and Von Seggern's 1991 study (as cited in Brawer, 1996) documents orientation programs as one of the most common intervention strategies for adult learners. Orientations have been found to provide students with information essential to their academic socialization: (a) descriptions of college program offerings; (b) the college's expectations for students; (c) information about assistance and services for examining interests, values, and abilities; (d) encouragement to establish working relationships with faculty; (e) information about services that help with adjustment to college; and (f) financial aid information (Brawer, 1996, p. 2).

Grossett's (1991) findings include improved educational planning that would enhance both younger and older students' persistence. He advises providing all new students early in the enrollment process with information that makes them aware of the array of program possibilities, course selections, registration procedures and available support services. This author also suggests individual counseling and advising sessions focused on goal setting (Grosset, 1991, p. 176).

Allen (1993) suggests that not only should orientation serve as a continuing process of integrating students, but also

periodic sessions should be held so students can share their frustrations and needs. Topics suggested by this author include learning skills' workshops, time management, study skills, learning to use the learning resources, and other topics suggested by the students (Allen, p. 21).

Retention Models

Astin's (1985) work states that many institutions view orientation not as a part of the academic program but as an introduction to college life. This author speculates that such orientation sessions might be more effectively used to inform students about the importance of involvement and to alert them to early signs of low involvement, such as boredom with courses, academic difficulties, minimal contact with other students, and so forth.

He suggests that the orientation session could also be used to collect baseline data for assessing talent development. The author concludes by suggesting that institutions should consider offering a first-term orientation course, which would give students an in-depth picture of the facilities and curricular opportunities on the campus and would also allow them to explore, under controlled conditions, the possible connections between their college experiences and their long-term life plans. Such an exploration would serve not only to increase involvement in college life by demonstrating its relevance to their later lives but also to open up new career possibilities and other life options (Astin, p. 166).

Parnell (1990) suggests that a college president who does not demonstrate that he or she cares, and cares deeply about students, will not be serving the highest and best interest of the institution. The president must develop some form of two-way communications with students. Nothing can replace "the pressing of the flesh," as politicians like to say, in student-president relations. This effort must be sincere (Parnell, p. 25).

Diggs (1988) defines a "good" orientation as one that is a mixture of pep-rally, sermon, parade, show and plan. It is inspection and direction, hope and help, and promise. This author recommends drawing up an outline that covers everything that you would want to know and hear if your son or daughter was anticipating attendance. He also suggests using a full day for orientation with half of the time devoted to introductions, policies and procedures. The other half should be solely devoted to placement. He further recommends that all members of your staff become involved in orientation (Diggs, p. 59).

Two commercial retention programs were also reviewed. The Pacific Institute program's main objectives are employee development, greater student success, and increased admissions and retention rates in private career schools. The program educates both staff and student in the effective management of change and personal growth through the application of effective thinking skills (Pacific Institute, 1991).

The program provides a comprehensive intervention that consists of education, training, and consulting. The curriculum, consisting of video, audio, and written training materials, is

designed to impact and empower both the staff and the students. The Pacific Institute joins in partnership with the school and tailors a seven step process to improve effectiveness throughout a private career school. The seven step process includes staff training, facilitator training, trial implementation, strategic vision building workshop, staff training, student training, and follow-up.

The Retention Management System designed by Noel-Levitz (1994) advises that getting new students started on the path to success in college is key to increasing your campus's retention rate (Noel-Levitz, 1996). This program uses an inventory during the admissions process to assess dimensions related to students dropping out of college. The processed information is used by advisors to identify students' strengths and areas of need, and then to establish individualized interventions.

Summary

Proprietary colleges serve a significant number of educationally and academically disadvantaged students and enroll significant portions of the underrepresented minorities in higher education. Minority students make up 43% of enrollment in private career colleges, 21.1% in private, not-for profit institutions and 22.6% in public colleges and universities. That translates into 560,000 minority students who are served by the proprietary school and college sector of postsecondary education (NCES, 1993, p. 15).

The norm since the 1980s in student populations in colleges and universities has been the nontraditional and adult students.

Planning programs for the completion of these students must be of primary importance. Successes in colleges for the nontraditional students relate to programs and services both in the classroom and on campus (Allen, 1993). Institutions that have become successful in attracting minority students and have subsequently found themselves wrestling with the dilemma of how to retain these students should be interested in findings of retention studies (Strumpf & Hunt, 1993).

An abundance of literature on retention, retention research, and retention models for traditional colleges is available; however, literature on the proprietary sector is limited. There is need for more research in this area. This evaluation study used the information gleaned from this literature review as the conceptual base. The format was adapted for implementation into the two-year proprietary school sector. The purpose of this study was to evaluate a commercial retention program designed to improve retention of proprietary school students.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

For this study the evaluation methodology was appropriate. The procedural steps that were used in this study are a review of the literature, establishing criteria, validating the criteria, determining the measurement method, collecting data, and comparing achieved results on each criteria.

The literature review formed the conceptual basis for the study. The review focused on the underlying problem of student attrition. Results of different types of student interventions were part of the review. Two commercial retention programs were reviewed.

Second, criteria against which the program was evaluated were established. Expected outcomes of the program were taken from the company literature (Pacific Institute, 1991, p. 10). The benefits, as stated in the literature, include a 25-50 percent increase in student success and school retention that would recapture some thousands of tuition dollars, significant increase in graduation rates and job placement, lower student default rates, fewer no-shows in admissions, and enhanced employee development and motivation. Also objectives of the institution in implementing the program were researched to draft the criteria. The President/CEO and president of the campus were interviewed.

The criteria were developed around these standards to which the program was created. A committee was then chosen to validate the criteria. The criteria were validated by requesting

confirmation from the campus President, President/CEO of the company and Vice President of Academic Advancement, all of whom would use the outcomes of the evaluation. The committee met once and all members concurred that the criteria were appropriate measures of the value of the program being evaluated.

The measurement method for each criteria was then determined. Institutional records, statistical analysis, surveys, and focus groups were considered as measurement tools. Three measurement tools were selected for the three different criteria. A statistical test was used to determine if there was a relationship between the program and retention of the two groups (chi-square). The group who had been exposed to the program was compared to the start group before the program was implemented. Day students from both classes were analyzed for drops.

A cost analysis benefit measure was established. The cost of the program in terms of expenditures (consulting, supplies and textbooks) was collected and compared to the increase in revenue generated by increased retention (Cost of the program vs. Benefit in terms of gained tuition dollars). This data was recorded on a table for comparison.

A survey, developed by the company (Pacific Institute) as a six month feedback was mailed to the faculty who participated in the employee development and motivation training. When the surveys were returned, they were analyzed and results were recorded in a table.

When all other procedural steps were completed, data related to the established criteria were collected from student records, faculty and others at the institution. The data were analyzed and compared for achievement on each criteria. This information was recorded in tables.

Assumptions

It is assumed that the groups of students and faculty who participated in the program are representative samples of this school.

Limitations

The results of this study may not be generalizable to other college setting because the data and information obtained for the study pertains to technical programs or activities of the proprietary sector.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The procedures for evaluating a commercial retention program at Topeka Technical College included a review of the literature and other retention models, establishing criteria, validating the criteria, determining the measurement method, collecting data, and comparing achieved results on each criteria.

Although literature on the subject of student retention was limited for the proprietary school sector, there was an abundance of literature for traditional educational institutions. The literature review established the fact that attrition is a problem with adult learners (as cited in Kerka).

Research on many retention idea and systems was reviewed. Faculty interaction (Crockett, 1992) was found to be an important factor. Orientations had an impact on retention of students. Secondary sources reviewed indicated that student bonding sessions improve retention, and that faculty and staff should be involved. Common courses found in commercial packages and in studies included success courses in goal setting, time management, stress management, study skills, self-esteem, test taking skills, and career skills. Successful retention models also shared information necessary for academic socialization.

The commercial retention program that was evaluated used student and staff training as a part of the program. The expected outcomes of the program included improved retention, enhanced employee development and motivation, and recapturing

some of the thousands of tuition dollars lost due to high dropout rates.

The commercial retention program being used at Topeka Technical College shared many of the elements described in the literature as having a positive impact on student retention. The early intervention, and student and staff training have been successfully used as retention systems in the literature.

Second, criteria against which the program was evaluated were established. Expected outcomes of the program were reviewed from the company literature (Pacific Institute, 1991, p. 10). The benefits, according to the literature, included a 25-50 percent increase in student success and school retention that would recapture some thousands of tuition dollars, significant increase in graduation rates and job placement, lower student default rates, fewer no-shows in admissions, and enhanced employee development and motivation.

Also objectives of the institution in implementing the program were researched to draft the criteria. The institution had adopted the program to increase student retention and enhance faculty development and motivation. The owner of the company wanted a return on the money invested in the program in terms of increased retention (tuition dollars).

The three criteria that were selected, after a review of these established standards, were increased retention of the first quarter group, cost benefit, and enhanced development of faculty. The worth of the program was determined in terms of improved retention of first quarter students, cost benefit of the

program to the institution, and faculty's perception of effectiveness of the program.

The criteria were validated by a committee made up of the president of the campus, vice president of academic advancement, and the president/CEO of the company. All committee members agreed that the three criteria were a valid evaluation of the program's worth (see Table 1).

The measurement method for each criteria was then determined. It was decided that retention improvement would be measured by determining if a relationship existed between type of orientation and retention of first quarter students. Chi-square was the statistical test used.

Cost benefit was determined using the expenses (cost of materials and investments) and comparing them to the benefits (returns, net income, profit). The cost of the program included the consulting and training fees, supplies and textbooks for students. The expenses of implementing the program were compared to the benefits.

Faculty's perception of the effectiveness of the program were measured using a six-month Follow-up Memo (see Appendix B). Memos were mailed to each instructor at the college who had attended the faculty training seminar.

As a measure of the worth of the program in terms of improved retention, students who did not receive the Pacific Institute orientation courses (July day starts) were compared to those who participated (October day starts) using chi-square. Table 2 shows information collected on the two start groups.

Table 1

Criteria Used to Evaluate Effectiveness of Retention Program

ESTABLISHED CRITERIA	TOOL USED TO MEASURE CRITERIA
Improved Retention of Students	Chi-Square for relationship of type of orientation and retention of first quarter students
Cost Benefit	Comparison of expenses for program to tuition gained in dollars from improved retention
Enhanced Faculty Development	Faculty Survey

Note. Criteria were developed and validated by stakeholders in the program. Measurement tools were established.

The July group started with 43 day students who did not attend the retention training. At the end of the twelve week quarter 29 of the students were still active and 14 of the students had dropped. The October group started with 38 day students. At the end of the twelve week quarter 14 of this group had also dropped. Twenty-four of the students were still active.

The observed data was arranged in the appropriate table format (e.g. 2 x 2). The frequency of occurrence and the expected frequency were calculated for the two groups. The J

Table 2

Student Data From Two Start Groups

Class Start	Group	Starts in Group	Drops in First Quarter
October	Orientation	38 Students	14
July	No Orientation	43 Students	14

Note. Students were grouped using start dates. One quarter equals twelve weeks.

group did not attend Pacific Institute. Fourteen of the 43 students dropped (see Table 2). The O group attended the student training. Fourteen of the thirty-eight students dropped in this start group. The observed and expected frequencies of the groups were compared.

The resulting Chi Square value was .16 using two degrees of freedom with .05 level of significance (Appendix C). Since a chi square value of at least 3.84 must be obtained to be significant at even the 5% level of significance, it was determined that there was no significant difference in the groups. The research concluded that whatever differences appear to exist in the data were probably due to chance. In other words, the observed differences in the sample data are not statistically significant and may be attributed to chance.

Cost benefit, the second criteria, was determined using the expenses (cost of materials and investments) and comparing them to the benefits (returns, net income, profit). The cost of the program included the consulting and training fees, supplies and textbooks for students. The expenses of implementing the program were compared to the benefits. Since there was no effect on retention of students, there was no cost benefit to the school (see Table 3).

Faculty's perception of the effectiveness of the program were measured using a six-month Follow-up Memo (Appendix B). Memos were mailed to each instructor at the college who completed the faculty training seminar. Questions were answered and the questionnaire was returned (see Table 4).

Nine faculty members were surveyed. Seven faculty members considered the training very valuable and eight would attend a follow-up session. Five used the concepts occasionally with family and work or school. Six used the concepts learned in the training to manage stress. Equal numbers (four) used it extensively or occasionally in interacting with others.

Table 3

Cost Benefit Analysis of Retention Program

	July Expenses	October Expenses
Consulting & Training	\$4,494.25	\$19.95
Supplies	16.33	
Textbooks	3,976.70	2,168.50
Total Expenses	\$8,486.28	\$2,188.45
BENEFITS (returns, net income, profit)		
Returns in Tuition Gained	0	0
Total Benefits	0	0
Total Cost	\$8,486.28	\$2,188.45
Total Benefits	0	0

Note. The expenses for the program were more than the cost benefit to the institution.

Table 4
Survey Results from Faculty

Question	Used Extensively	Used Occasionally	Used Very Little
<u>Used Concept in</u>			
1. Family Life	1	5	3
2. Work or School	5	3	1
3. Managing Stress	1	6	2
4. Interacting with Others	4	4	1
5. Other		3	
Would you attend a follow-up session?	8 Yes	1 No	
How valuable do you consider the training?	7 Very Valuable	1 Average	1 Below Average

Note. Nine instructors who completed the faculty development were surveyed to measure their perception of the effectiveness of the program.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Topeka Technical College has a retention problem, therefore a commercial retention program was adopted by management. The program included student and staff training. One group of students and most faculty had completed the training, but the worth of program had not been established. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the commercial retention program instituted at Topeka Technical College.

There were three basic research questions to be answered by the study. What were the criteria upon which the effectiveness of the retention program is based? What measurement tools could be used to operationally define the criteria? Based upon application of the measurement, did the program meet the established criteria?

The program was evaluated in terms of improved retention, cost benefit, and enhanced faculty development. Literature reviewed as a part of this study confirmed that similar programs improved student retention. This observation was not supported in this evaluation.

Conclusions

There was no relationship established between the retention of the two start groups at the end of the twelve week quarter and style of orientation. The frequency of students who dropped and those who were retained showed no relationship to style of orientation using the chi square test. There was no cost benefit to the company when expenses were compared to gained revenue as a

result of improved retention. It was concluded that the student training introduced as a part of Pacific institute bore no relationship to the retention of first quarter students in this start group. It was also concluded that tuition dollars being lost due to high dropout rates were not recaptured on this group. Faculty responded positively to the training. A majority of the faculty considered the training very valuable. They use the concepts learned in the faculty training.

Implications

The results of the study imply that altering the orientation style by adding the Pacific Institute materials was not an effective retention method for first quarter students in these two groups. Adding the student and staff training did not improve cost benefit when the cost of the program was compared to revenue from improved retention of the two groups. Faculty responded positively to faculty training and development.

Recommendations

Topeka Technical College should make an effort to continue investigating ways to improve retention. It was recommended that the Vice President of Academic Advancement share the results of this study with the faculty and staff. The results of the study should also be published for the other five schools in the organization. Faculty training is received positively by the faculty and should be continued.

Further study should be done on the relationship between retention of students and other variables. When other variables are introduced, the College should replicate the study.

Opportunities for improving student retention programs and faculty training should be continued. With the strong theoretical base that was supported by the literature for this study, an opportunity to develop an effective retention program is still present at the campus. Ways to revise this program to make it effective in terms of retention should be investigated.

It was also recommended that ideas for improving retention should remain a priority at the school. Results of retention studies should be based on valid research design as opposed to speculation and guessing. The results of this research should be documented.

Since student outcomes are of primary importance for the continued success of the school, retention programs should constantly be reviewed. The institution needs to know what retention strategies "work" and which do "not work" to produce the desired outcome. The results of retention studies and research at the campus should be used to provide this information.

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APPENDIXES

Implementing the Program

Classroom Schedules

Grading Suggestions

Course Outline

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CLASSROOM SCHEDULES

Thought Patterns for a Successful Career teaches achievement skills and is designed to fit into your class schedules. Important concepts are presented in short, dynamic bursts that allow for flexible integration of the basic concepts into your regular curriculum.

The students will be best served if the material is presented in a concentrated burst of information at the beginning of their studies, followed by consistent reinforcement through planned follow-up activities, culminating with another concentrated burst of information and activities just prior to beginning their job search.

Scheduling this program into a successful model for educational delivery

This program is designed to give students an intensive exposure to concepts that can effect significant changes in their lives. When applied, it is recommended that the program be delivered in short segments in order to fully assimilate the education. Schedule the course in a condensed but lengthy burst up-front in the student's program whenever possible. Greater success has been measured, through increased retention and fewer no-shows, by schools that have implemented this program as a first-month, first-quarter, or first-semester course. Attendance should be at a minimum of one hour per day through Unit 22, Part 2, Affirmation Workshop. This will provide momentum and give students all the tools they need to be successful.

Because this is a flexible program, units can then be revisited and delivered in other courses throughout the student's program. An understanding of typical times of student frustration, which can result in drop-outs, can be critical in the delivery of these units.

Suggested points of delivery before and during the educational process can be at the following vulnerability points.

Enrollment/financial aid process

- Unit 1 How the Blind Can See
- Unit 2 Success in New Situations
- Unit 11 The Downward Spiral
- Unit 13 The Self-Talk Cycle
- Unit 24 Self-Efficacy and Resiliency

Student Orientation

- Unit 1 How the Blind Can See
- Unit 2 Success in New Situations
- Unit 11 The Downward Spiral
- Unit 13 The Self-Talk Cycle
- Unit 24 Self-Efficacy and Resiliency

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Before first exams or midterms

- Unit 2 Success in New Situations
- Unit 3 Working Smarter, Not Harder
- Unit 7 Habits and Attitudes
- Unit 12 Comfort Zones
- Unit 15 The Power of Self-Esteem

Beginning of 3rd or 4th grading periods

- Unit 2 Success in New Situations
- Unit 3 Working Smarter, Not Harder
- Unit 6 The Power or Beliefs
- Unit 13 The Self-Talk Cycle
- Unit 14 In the Eye of the Beholder: Prosperity or Disaster

Any school break longer than a weekend (prior to 3-day weekends, Thanksgiving break, December Holiday break, Spring break, teacher workdays, etc.)

- Unit 5 How Your Mind Works
- Unit 10 Wizards
- Unit 11 The Downward Spiral
- Unit 13 The Self-Talk Cycle
- Unit 17 Constructive and Restrictive Motivation

Prior to the beginning of or during any significantly difficult grading period or subject

- Unit 6 The Power of Beliefs
- Unit 7 Habits and Attitudes
- Unit 8 How Self-Image Is Formed
- Unit 12 Comfort Zones
- Unit 16 Creative Discontent
- Unit 24 Self-Efficacy and Resiliency

Beginning of the final grading period or prior to graduation

- Unit 6 The Power of Beliefs
- Unit 7 Habits and Attitudes
- Unit 9 How I Describe Myself to Me
- Unit 12 Comfort Zones
- Unit 13 The Self-Talk Cycle
- Unit 17 Constructive and Restrictive Motivation
- Unit 23 Experiencing the Future
- Unit 24 Self-Efficacy and Resiliency

GRADING SUGGESTIONS

There are various options for grading this course. Here are two possibilities that could be considered in addition to the evaluation system already in use in the school.

1. Letter grades based on a point system:

- 90-100 = A
- 80-89 = B
- 70-79 = C
- under 70 = Failing

Point values:

- 25 = Perfect attendance
- 25 = Classroom participation
- 25 = Assignments - could include outside reading/activity assignments
- 25 = Culminating project/paper

Advantage of letter grading: This is a "real life" situation. In the work world the person will be "graded" by various means and people. Ex: Attendance: At work there are few "excused absences" so attendance is an important and realistic habit (and value) to foster.

2. Pass/Fail rating system:

- Pass = all requirements met to teacher satisfaction
- Fail (repeat) = requirements not met

Requirements:

- Class attendance
- Classroom participation
- Assignments - outside as well as in class
- Culminating project/paper

Advantage of a Pass/Fail rating system: The student doesn't have to worry about grades. There is no "in-between" in this situation. This too is a real life situation in jobs where there is no close supervision. The employee is either employed and working satisfactorily or fired.

Regardless of the evaluation system selected, it is important to remember that this class should mirror the work values the students will face upon graduation and employment. Each concept contained in the curriculum is directly applicable to both the school and work world.

Whatever grading system is utilized should be made clear to the students at the outset of the course. We strongly recommend that a copy of the grading policy for the class be given to each student.

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COURSE OUTLINE

Following is a sample of a course outline for another Pacific Institute program, *Steps to Excellence for Personal Success (STEPS)*, from the syllabus for accreditation from Columbia College, Caguas, Puerto Rico,

I General Information

Course Name: *Steps to Excellence for Personal Success (STEPS)*
 Code:
 Credits: 1
 Hours: 16
 Prerequisites: None
 Text: *Student Manual (Steps To Excellence for Personal Success Application Guide)*
 Lou Tice, The Pacific Institute

II Description

The objective of this course is to have the student understand the way he acts, works, and develops according to his inner truth. He will also understand how past experiences and beliefs affect decision making. This course will provide the student with the necessary tools to change his beliefs, habits, and negative attitudes.

The *STEPS* program will help the student build a new image and motivate himself to achieve positive results which will guide his personal and professional future in such a rapidly changing world.

III Justification

Results based on studies carried out at Columbia College revealed that the main reasons students abandon their studies are lack of motivation, problems with low self-esteem, lack of pre-set goals, negative habits and attitudes towards their development as individuals.

In its quest to serve and bring the best alternatives to its students, Columbia College has adopted the *STEPS* program to help break the negative circle of bad habits possibly programmed since birth.

Because students will develop resources and techniques they can successfully bring to their professions, they will gain new and better attitudes towards themselves, their work, their co-worker, and towards a better image of Puerto Rican employees.

IV Objectives

At the end of the course the student will:

A. be able to define and apply key concepts presented on each unit.

- B. recognize the barriers that keep his from reaching his goals.
- C. be able to develop deep awareness and understanding of his own potential.
- D. utilize the material learned to define and achieve personal goals.
- E. elevate his self-esteem by recognizing his potential.
- F. develop the necessary skills towards accepting and understanding the value of her academic achievement.

V

Methodology**A. Strategies**

1. The facilitator will answer questions, clarify concepts, and adapt the information to specific situations within the group.
2. Group discussion
3. Individual readings
4. Exercises and group dynamics
5. Individual exercises

B. Teaching Aids

1. Recorder
2. TV
3. Transparencies projector
4. Transparencies
5. Teaching resources
6. Video recorder
7. Audio cassette recorder
8. Blackboard
9. Flip chart
10. Colored pencils
11. Index cards (3"X5")
12. Instrumental music
13. Student Manual
14. Facilitator Manual

C. Evaluation

1. Student will individually answer the unit questions and do the homework with the help of the facilitator. Each unit in the student manual contains material that must be answered.
2. In order to be approved, student must meet the following criteria:
 - Perfect attendance
 - Write goals and change them into affirmations
3. The facilitator will grade the student by giving:
 - A for approved
 - NA for not approved

VI Suggested Follow-Through Program

Mentorship; to utilize students who have already been through the course.

Graduation Activities so that students can organize and prepare the graduation program by demonstrating the changes that have already taken place within them. Students demonstrate leadership skill, self-confidence, and creativity by offering a good program to the rest of the students.

Preparation of faculty and administrative personnel so that they use and reinforce the curriculum by their words and actions when they are in contact with students (they all speak the same language).

Committee meetings for facilitators and students who have already been through the program and also with those currently participating so evaluations and recommendations can be made.

Individual evaluation and follow-up of the students by the facilitator in order to support students in their endeavors. Evaluation and follow-up includes a visit and counseling with parents and family at the home of the student.

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Appendix C

TEST

Actual

	m	w
a	58	35
n	11	25
d	10	23

Expected

	m	w
a	45.35	47.65
n	17.56	18.44
d	16.09	16.91

0.000309

KR's

Actual

	Jul no PI	Oct PI
Stayed	29	24
Dropped	14	14

Expected

	Jul no PI	Oct PI
Stayed	28.14	24.86
Dropped	14.86	13.14

0.685791

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Organization: Education America, Inc.

Printed Name: Karon J. Rosa

Address: 500 E. Markham, Suite 305
Little Rock, AR

Position: VP Academic Advancement

Tel. No. 501 376 6300

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